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Serving as an unfortunate benchmark for the twenty-first century, 9/11 has completely altered society's perceptions of personal safety, security and social identity, along with provoking intense emotional reactions. One outlet for these resulting emotions has been through art and literature. Five years have since passed and contemporary authors are still struggling to accurately represent that tragic day and its consequent impression. This paper provides an analysis of how the events of 9/11 have been incorporated into adult fiction. Variations of themes related to psychology, interpersonal relationships, political and social perspectives, and heroism were found to be used most frequently among authors.

#### Headings:

Fiction

Loss (Psychology) -- Fiction

New York (N.Y.) -- Fiction

September 11 Terrorist Attacks, 2001 -- Fiction

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“AN EXPERIENCE OUTSIDE OF CULTURE”: A TAXONOMY OF 9/11 ADULT  
FICTION

by  
Allison B. Moonitz

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David Carr

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## **1. Introduction**

On a clear blue day in September 2001, four events occurred that would irrevocably change the lives, history and culture of Americans forever. In the span of just a few hours, the World Trade Center, or “Twin Towers,” would collapse onto the streets of Manhattan, NY, a large portion of the Pentagon in Washington D.C. would be completely demolished, and a plane full of passengers would crash in a Pennsylvania field. All of these acts would later be attributed to Islamic terrorists led by Osama bin Laden. At the time when these events transpired, the general feeling was that of fear, horror and confusion. The fact that television stations would show nothing but looped and/or live footage of the events undoubtedly exacerbated the situation. As Harf and Lombardi state, these horrific events cemented the day into the minds of Americans, leaving a major question as to its effects on the future of our society:

But as the twin towers fell, our ability to comprehend the magnitude of the personal tragedies was eclipsed by our emphasis on other questions, such as the origins of the attackers and the scope of their ghastly plan. We watched with morbid fascination...as the New York Times later reported, Americans ‘wondered what kind of world we would find ourselves living in the future’ even as the twin towers were collapsing. (3)

September 11, 2001 (hereafter referred to as “9/11”) marked a crucial time in history because it reminded America of its vulnerability both as a nation and as a collective group of people. The results of 9/11 had an extreme impact on the political and social climate of New York, as well as the rest of the country, ranging from intense patriotism and full governmental support to anarchist conspiracy theories to increased

hostilities towards Muslim communities. Indeed, 9/11 was a watershed moment for the country and triggered many new political policies and actions, including the development of the Department of Homeland Security and military invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Though such developments have promised to reduce the likelihood of future attacks on the country itself, the fact remains that people are still struggling to cope with the emotional repercussions of such a devastating event. After witnessing sheer horror unfold on a live television feed, what can help people recover psychologically, emotionally, as well as spiritually from such a tragedy?

Over the past five years, relief has come in a wide variety of media, including music, comedy, art and perhaps most importantly, through literature. Of the varying formats, it is literature that serves as the permanently accessible record in explaining 9/11's impact on the human condition. This is not to say that literature and these other forms function as a definitive panacea towards healing all pain; as Aronson bluntly states:

What does art have to offer us in a time such as this, a time of tragedy, and fear, a time of war in which our future and that of our children seems so much less certain than it did a month ago?... No painting, nor poem, nor dance; no novel, nor song, nor sculpture would have stopped the planes from destroying the World Trade Center or the wing of the Pentagon or the jet in Pennsylvania. It is not likely that any act could even have deterred the people who committed those acts. (27)

Clearly, such forms of artistic expression would not have prevented the atrocities of 9/11 from happening. What these artistic expressions have enabled, however, is the creative release of inner emotional turmoil. Literary works serve the ultimate purpose in allowing this catharsis to occur. As Aronson continues:

Now we have more enduring questions about what makes a life more meaningful, about the sources of evil, about how to care for each other well... Art can take us inside of ourselves, past the moment's preoccupations... What remains as long as

human beings live and think and breathe is self-knowledge, and art can help us to find that understanding. (28)

One of the many benefits of creating art (used in the broadest of senses) is in its healing powers. Art provides a safe outlet for personal expression, allowing for the release of anger, hurt, fear, love and revenge. What's more, the artist isn't the only one to benefit from such creations; art is also a tool for eliciting empathy, sympathy and identity from its viewers/participants/readers. In troubled times, it can be argued that people need to feel a sense of connection and solidarity among their peers. The development of 9/11-inspired art has helped to strengthen these social bonds, provide emotional catharsis, as well as foster a sense of tribute to the victims of the attack.

One interesting component to this memorializing process is the evolution of 9/11 as it appears in works of fiction. What sets this apart from the rest of 9/11 art is the inherent nature of fiction itself. The major principle of fiction-writing is that it produces an alternate reality where suspension of disbelief is often required. Fiction writers who have used 9/11 in their works have created a rather strange paradox because 9/11 occurred not only in their reality, but in their characters' as well. The events that took place on that day are rooted in the readers' everyday reality, yet to read about that day in a work of fiction requires a more advanced level of literary cognition. A strange dualism occurs as a result - the inner acknowledgement that an act so dreadful and so surreal it should be fiction actually did occur and is used in a fictive setting along with the same kinds of emotions that were displayed by actual people on that day.

The use of 9/11 in fiction does make sense because it was, as William Gibson's protagonist Cayce Pollard explains in Pattern Recognition, "an experience outside of culture" (137). Similar to the assassination of JFK, everyone has his or her own account

about where they were when they learned of the terrorists' acts. This kind of individualistic quality is what lends 9/11 the flexibility to be used in fiction; on 9/11, everybody had a "story" to tell, complete with the full range of human emotions.

From the writer's perspective, to utilize 9/11 in a work of fiction requires not only sensitivity toward the survivors, but also a fair sense of judgment and realism. Because 9/11 happened so recently and was experienced so deeply in public, the social mindset isn't as forgiving of writers who take liberties with the "plot" element of the terrorists' acts. As a result, there is almost a sense of obligation by the fiction writer to accurately depict those events accurately and truthfully, yet at the same time, to have it situated in a completely fabricated fictional world. Though there is a fair amount of children's literature that deals with 9/11, it seems that the aim of that type of fiction is directed more towards explaining the rationale of events to children. Adult fiction has a greater responsibility of framing 9/11 to readers who are well aware of why the event occurred. Thus, the purpose of this paper will be to analyze how adult fiction writers have employed 9/11 as a subject in their contemporary works, looking at the major themes and emotions that accompany a writer's usage of 9/11 within the context of their work. The patterns, themes, learning objectives, depictions as well as notable absences found will be discussed in detail, thus creating a classification schema of 9/11 as a literary subject.

Because of the severity of 9/11 and its impact on American history and culture, writers will undoubtedly continue to use 9/11 as a subject and theme in fiction. From a librarian's perspective, it is crucial to understand the direction that this trend will follow. Collection development in a library is centered on providing materials that interest users;

people will always be interested in 9/11 because of its currency, longevity and the depth of emotions expressed by the nation on that day. Public as well as academic libraries would certainly be remiss if they did not include such works in their collections. It is a library's responsibility to preserve a cultural standard; it goes without saying that these books will help to nurture and explain this moment of American culture and its subsequent consequences on history.



## **2. Literature Review**

Because 9/11 is still a relatively recent event in American history, there is a noticeable lack of empirical research on its effects within the library and social sciences fields. This is not to say that there is no literature of value that discusses 9/11 and its moral, social and psychological consequences; instead, the data is simply more qualitative, relying on personal narratives rather than statistical analysis. It is expected that research of both kinds will continue to evolve on this topic as more time passes, ultimately providing a better frame of reference and perspective. Perhaps 9/11 will remain too culturally sensitive a subject for researchers to dissect quantitatively. Regardless of this, it's necessary to understand the influence of that day on the potential author's reality in order to fully analyze the day as a subject in literature.

### *The place of 9/11 within a historical context*

When considering 9/11's impact on American history, one must place it appropriately within a historical timeline, especially next to other major cultural tragedies. In fact, when considering that the twentieth century was rife with countless wars, bombings and genocide, 9/11 might just serve as yet another reminder of the worst of the human condition. Yet much of the literature that has already been produced separates 9/11 from the rest of these horrific historical events; 9/11 serves as a point of reference that reflects America's tenuous relationships with other countries, while acting simultaneously as a global powerhouse and scarred nation.

The literature that discusses 9/11's place in history usually compares it to two key tragedies – the bombings of Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima. Wirtz explains that 9/11's connection to Pearl Harbor is actually quite logical, because “both events are examples of a more general international phenomenon – the surprise attack” (73). Wirtz goes on to document that before both Pearl Harbor and 9/11 transpired, the government was fully aware of the warning signs, yet they did not anticipate the likelihood of it occurring. In the case of Pearl Harbor, the Roosevelt administration didn't suspect that the Japanese were planning to attack because they “simply lacked the economic resources or military capability to defeat the US military in a long war” (74). Sadly, the Roosevelt administration couldn't have been more wrong; the Japanese integrated the technology and exploited carrier aviation with immense skill that the government had no way of predicting their exact plans (Wirtz 76).

This same thinking later occurred with the Bush administration. Despite being engaged with an ongoing war against al Qaeda, the international network of terrorists that bin Laden belongs to, US government officials were aware of the threat of an interior terrorist attack, but did not think that al Qaeda had the funds or wherewithal to proceed. The 9/11 commission later reported that by September 11, 2001, al Qaeda possessed not only the ability to raise and move the money necessary to finance an attack, but communications sufficient to enable planning and direction of operatives and those who would be helping them (9/11 Commission Report 2004).

Wirtz's argument is that it was this kind of dismissive thinking that led to Americans' shock when the events actually took place. As Wirtz explains:

Pearl Harbor and the terrorist attacks on September 11 were not bolts out of the blue. But because they were generally perceived to have occurred without

warning, they both have changed attitudes and produced policies that have reduced the likelihood and consequences of the surprise attack. (75)

These kinds of policies can be seen with the recent administration's emphasis on homeland security and consequent military invasions on Afghanistan and Iraq.

Ironically, Wirtz points out that it is America's aggressive behavior that prompted these terrorist events; both al Qaeda and Japan were unhappy with the US's dominance in foreign markets and liberal tendencies (77).

Hiroshima is another frequently cited event that shares qualities with 9/11, though the association isn't nearly as comparable as that of Pearl Harbor. Davis contends that the U.S.'s bombing of Hiroshima was "the first act of global terrorism, the harbinger of acts that would derive their rebarbative logic from the finality with which 8/6/45 consigned 'humanistic' considerations to the dustbin of history" (128). Davis goes on to argue that this kind of action was completely redefined by the government for the American people to assuage their guilt. Though the tragic events that occurred on 9/11 were in fact inflicted on the U.S., Davis brings up an excellent question regarding the historical perspective:

On 9/11 did many Americans realize, if only for a moment, that we were now experiencing, in diminished form, what it was like to be in Hiroshima city on 8/6/45 when in an instant an entire city disappeared, nowhere to run from the flash that vaporized over 200,000 souls and condemned the survivors, the walking dead, to a condition of nameless dread, to wandering directionless in a landscape become nightmare? (127)

The bottom line demonstrates this repetitive and almost cyclical nature of tragic events such as 9/11 throughout American history. Because of its relative currency in American politics, the full extent of 9/11 has yet to be determined. Conlin and Shields offer a eerie prophesy with a quote that "I don't think we yet know what this event will

lead to in our culture, but I do think this could be as important as World War I or World War II because this could well become World War III” (92). In the end, there is little doubt among many of these authors that 9/11’s legacy will be just as permanent as that of other major catastrophic events.

### *Psychological Effects of 9/11*

When examining the effects that 9/11 had on American culture, it’s essential to consider its overwhelming damage on the human psyche. Feelings such as fear, anxiety, mourning, depression and overall sense of loss were commonly documented among the majority of psychological literature that analyzes 9/11’s consequences.

Arguably one of the most discussed consequences of 9/11, the greatest psychological stressor was coping with the sheer trauma of the day. Davis states that trauma occurs “when something happens that shatters the ego and its defenses. An event persists as an image that awakes other images buried in the psyche, images bound to repressed memories that bring with their return an anxiety that threatens psychic dissolution” (127). In his discussion, Taylor breaks down trauma into three time periods: the impact phase, which is the time of “maximal and direct effects,” the recoil phase, in which the threat of danger has passed, leading people to experience relief and pain when thinking about the event, followed by the post-traumatic phase, which focuses on readjustment (128). The post-traumatic phase is ultimately where recovery efforts occur, with varying degrees of success. Throughout all three phases, trauma can unfortunately manifest itself somatically as well as psychologically. To illustrate this, Kai Erikson states that symptoms of trauma can include:

Periods of nervous, restless activity – scanning the surrounding world for signs of danger, breaking into explosive rages, reacting with a start to everyday sights and sounds – against a numbed, gray background of depression, feelings of helplessness, a loss of various motor skills and a general closing off of the spirit as the mind tries to insulate itself from further harm. Additionally, there are a number of ‘triggers’ or associative conditions that cause returns to trauma. (qtd. in Vickroy 12)

One of the hardest aspects about dealing with 9/11 related trauma is the overwhelming sense of loss. Mourning is a common way to deal with grief, but the gruesome effects of 9/11 have made this process rather difficult. Boss offers some grisly figures that in 2002, over 2,000 individuals were presumed dead, only 289 bodies were found intact and over 19,000 body parts were found and unidentified (552). Boss goes on to suggest that this lack of closure with a large part of the victims’ families can create a sense of “ambiguous loss.” In general, Americans have a difficult time accepting death; the fact that some families can’t even find the remains of their loved ones prevents this closure from ever occurring. Boss makes the argument that “people can say goodbye more easily when they see the evidence of a dead body and participate in group rituals of mourning and dispensing remains. This process of mourning breaks down the cultural denial of death and loss” (561).

One particular mechanism for mourning the loss of life is through rituals. Lawrence defines rituals as “public expressions of sentiment that convey meanings to audiences” (35). Throughout the fall of 2001, ritual mourning occurred throughout New York City and the nation as well as the entire world through candlelight vigils, commemorative ceremonies, memorial services and moments of silence. Lawrence states that all of these acts helped unify America as a whole, creating a “transfusion of innocence. Those who die or suffer on behalf of the nation transfer the innocence from

their context of victimization back to the nation that bears the responsibility for responding to their loss” (37). Aside from the collective grief, rituals also enable individuals to surmount their feelings of loss and allow for proper closure.

Another coping mechanism that was especially helpful for Americans post-9/11 was the use of humor. Kuipers offers a fairly extensive examination on the healing powers of humor after 9/11, though it was initially thought to have died along with the thousands of innocent Americans. To explain this absence, Kuipers reasons that:

After 9/11, Americans have stopped laughing. Most Americans felt that after these events, humor and laughter had become inappropriate... Humor about 9/11, as the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon had become known, was considered offensive by most people, creating a temporary moratorium on humor (70).

However, the most interesting facet about this is that after this cessation passed, an overabundance of disaster jokes and parodies emerged, spread mainly via the Internet. Kuipers goes on to explain that in the hypothetical joke, the disaster is linked in a humorous way with a topic that is felt to be incompatible with such a serious event. The effect of this mixture many cause outrage and amusement, though they derive much of their appeal from being blatantly inappropriate (71). Such dark humor, though its taste is arguable, served as a coping mechanism for Americans, offering a mental and emotional escape from the painful experiences of 9/11. This need for humor provided a sense of solidarity and community among Americans and its healing powers are emphasized by Kuipers.

As was previously mentioned, 9/11 reintroduced the notion that the U.S. is just as vulnerable to hostile attacks as the rest of the world. For a major developed country, such a view can be devastating to one’s feelings of personal safety. Consequently, this fear

can manifest itself into a need for vengeance in an effort to recapture that lost comfort. Taylor characterizes this desire for revenge as a “seductive drug,” because of its strong illusion that it will guard against further trauma. Taylor goes on to posit that after 9/11, with very few exceptions, Americans demanded vengeance – physically, by bombing or warfare; economically, by sanctions; emotionally, by vandalism and social hostility. What’s worse is that if left unchecked, this need for control after complete chaos can evolve into scapegoating by shifting the blame or responsibility to another person, religion or culture (Taylor 134,135). In this case, the Muslim community became the scapegoats and felt the brunt of America’s anger, though many Muslims themselves died as a result of the terrorists’ attacks.

Davis offers an interesting complement to this discussion of vengeance, dubbing George W. Bush as an “apt pupil,” who knew that “in order to resolve the trauma of 9/11 he must satisfy an outraged public...that nothing less than a global war against ‘terrorism’ will suffice” (130). Indeed, Bush’s approval ratings skyrocketed shortly after 9/11 and America regained their sense of security knowing that their Commander in Chief would not allow this kind of event to go unpunished. As Bush himself stated on the evening of September 11th:

The search is underway for those who are behind these evil acts. I’ve directed the full resources of our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those responsible and to bring them to justice. We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them. (2001)

Clearly, Bush knew that Americans were hurting and one of the best ways to alleviate this pain is through the promise of retribution. However, the question as to the military rationale and consequences of such political vengeance is another story for another paper, though it is sure to appear in future 9/11 fiction.

The idea of America's increased psychological need and reliance on heroism serves as a parallel to this concept of revenge. Hyde defines heroes as "people who exhibit greatness in some achievement and are admired for doing so. With their extraordinary actions and praiseworthy character, heroes thus 'stand out' from the crowd" (1). Though Hyde spends the bulk of his article discussing the importance of the orator as a hero during 9/11, the concept of heroism as a psychological entity is still applicable. In this time of fear and anxiety, Americans were desperate to rely on individuals who would go "above and beyond the call of duty" to help those in pain or trouble. Hyde makes a particularly interesting connection between heroism with conscience:

The call of conscience raises the issue of being courageous in adverse circumstances. The heroic acts of individuals testify to this fact. Any act of heroism presupposes the answering of the call of conscience. Heroes and conscience go hand in hand. Heroes provide the material that directs a society's moral compass, offers instructions for understanding what human greatness is, and thereby informs the members of society about what it takes for a finite being to live on after death in the hearts and minds of others. (8)

In this particular case, firefighters, police officers and medical staff were the groups that were showered with accolades, inspiring the phrase "Never Forget." Yet Hyde makes the point that heroism can occur beyond physical acts – that heroes are also the ones who make sense of the horror and chaos at hand and utilize language to explain the pain and emotion that the majority of us are feeling. This is where literature comes into play. The primary function of language, if we have something to say and are not merely babbling, is to uncover something within the world, to bring it into the open; and it can do this only because it itself transpires within the open world (Hyde 9). As such, the healing process, as well as the truth, can be inspired through language and by extension, through literature.



### *Emergence of the 9/11 narrative*

It is crucial to study not only 9/11's context within fiction, but also the potential problems and ethics associated with using the event in adult fiction. The evolution of 9/11 literature has ancestry in several different literary styles, namely the disaster and terrorist narratives. As one would expect, such narratives prove to be bleak, violent and misanthropic. As Stein argues, disaster narratives tend to be more homogenized for the social majority. Such narratives rely more on framing, where selected aspects of a perceived reality emphasized to seem more salient in a communicating text (Gans-Borsikin and Tisinger 103). Framing ultimately creates a skewed sense of reality, though in a post 9/11 world, such perceptions can serve as a coping mechanism of sorts. In the case of 9/11, the heroes who emerged from such chaos were police officers and firefighters, as opposed to the terrorists who believed they were acting as martyrs.

Framing seems to occur more frequently in trauma narratives. Vickroy defines these narratives as "fictional narratives that help readers to access traumatic experience" and acknowledges that they help to "illuminate the personal and public aspects of trauma, as well as elucidate our relationship to memory and forgetting within the complex interweavings of social and psychological relationships" (1). Vickroy argues that the emergence of such narratives usually reflect on our fear of loss of control as well as death. Furthermore, Vickroy states that trauma narratives serve an important role in fiction, namely that they "reshape cultural memory through personal contexts, adopting testimonial traits to prevent and bear witness against such repetitive horrors" (5). This kind of consolation ultimately preserves the event for posterity within a historical

context. For the individuals who choose to write about painful experiences, writing about trauma can lead toward the individual and collective healing and alleviation of symptoms

(8). Vickroy summarizes that:

Trauma narratives confront readers with difficult issues such as preoccupation with fears of death...Yet there is also considerable focus in these texts on changes to the self after undergoing trauma and learning to survive, even if in a marginal way. The obsessions and defenses that help the traumatized survive can become relational liabilities but also resourceful coping mechanisms, or assets to creativity. (27)

Clearly, the goals of such literature are meant to help restore human faith and good will.

After the traumatic events of 9/11, it is obvious that both writers as well as readers could use a good dose of healing optimism.

Far from this notion of the narrative acting as a healing tool, terrorist narratives are aimed more at the proverbial jugular of fiction writing. Kubiak states that there are three different types of terrorist narratives – those written by the terrorists themselves, those written analyzing terrorism itself, and those defined as “narrative terrorism,” where the author attempts “to destabilize narrativity itself” by incorporating terrorists and terrorism into the work (295-297). Kubiak then proceeds to argue that:

The real interplay between fiction and terrorism is in the way that traditional narratives are able to construct belief in the world. The ability of narrative (fictional or not) to construct a world that is fearful, uncertain and dangerous is its link to terror. (298)

Writers have utilized this tool long before 9/11 perhaps because it serves as a highly effective way of demonstrating the author’s political and/or social opinions.

Kunkel’s essay agrees with this thought, arguing that the terrorist novel serves as a kind of “metafiction, or fiction about fiction” (14). Kubiak poses a highly contentious belief that writers who write or use terrorism in their fiction works can be considered quasi-

terrorists themselves, simply for inducing fear into the lives of their characters, as well as in the reader himself. Kunkel concurs with this sentiment, saying that the terrorist “was the public symbol maker that the novelist wished and failed to be” (14). 9/11 does possess a certain type of narrative quality, simply because so many people witnessed the events unfold on that day. However, it is not anticipated that the bulk of the fiction reviewed for this paper will prove to be terrorist narratives.

It is arguable that the fictionalization of such a tragic historical event like 9/11 lends itself more towards a disaster narrative than anything else. This broader narrative helps to create a more universal literary camaraderie among readers. Such social solidarity is ultimately the main reason why so many writers have begun to incorporate 9/11 into their works. As was previously discussed, coping with such intensely upsetting emotions of 9/11 requires a certain amount of strength. As Salman Rushdie articulates, the shared 9/11 narratives prove to be more than just the sum of their parts; these stories are not just meant to be therapeutic, but also serve as a way of comprehending the event itself (Wertheimer 2002). Owuor concurs with this idea that “readers of (9/11) novels can ‘process the experience for themselves’ if they have an opportunity to translate fictional accounts into a mode for assuaging grief” (11).

Historically, writers have felt compelled to paint, dramatize, and capture the events of their day and often this transcends their own generation to become a sort of benchmark (Owuor 11). In 9/11’s case, this type of literary legacy holds many challenges as writers attempt to “metabolize the meaning of life after 9/11” (Owuor 11). In our culture, it is expected that writers will reflect on events and provide a commentary that underscores the emotions felt by the reader. Houen posits three major benefits to

9/11 “stories” – they act as therapeutic absorbers, serve as history markers, as well as create comfort out of chaos; “novels in particular, in their efforts to construct fully realized alternative universes, seemed navigable and inhabitable the way downtown was not” (421). It is this kind of “transformative realism” that enables the writer to provide an escape route for the grieving reader - this is fiction’s ultimate goal.

Following this, in much of the literary criticism that deals with 9/11, there is a general sense of frustration and impotence felt among writers struggling to use ordinary language to capture horror and tragedy. Rushdie offers a nice summary of this sentiment:

What happened that day is [that] the unimaginable happened, the unthinkable happened, the thing that you would never have believed could happen became a fact. And what it did is it meant that we all had to throw away everything we thought about everything and think it out again...suddenly the world has no shape and you have to make a new shape for yourself. (Wertheimer 2002)

Aside from the eternal aggravation of writer’s block, another major problem with writers using 9/11 as a subject in fiction is ethics. To write about an event that killed thousands of innocent lives requires a great deal of skill and moral sensitivity. Thus, a question arises as to how one should “write about the reality of the new terrorist threat, and the collective dissonance it has induced, without robbing too many graves?” (Cowley 24). As Cowley discusses, there is a fine balance between writers who “define the particulars of our age with precision, grace and moral authority” and those who mangle, stretch and distort the past and fiddle with the facts based on a whim (24-25). Minzesheimer concurs with the novelist’s challenge to strike the right balance between “being realistic and being exploitative,” where 9/11 references should not “serve as a plot device, but to say something about the character” (2002).

Another particular problem with writing fiction involving 9/11 is the difficulty in depicting something that happened relatively recently in such a way that will preserve the experience and emotions for posterity without running the risk of obsolescence; Berry and Di Leo attest to this in their article: “to speak of fiction’s present is necessarily to locate one’s own presence, hence to project a limit” (9). There is a fine literary line that writers must carefully balance on in order to keep their narratives empathetic and at the same time relevant. Some argue that this balance will become easier as time passes. After all, as Wyatt argues, “while there is no good rule about how much time has to pass before an event like 9/11 can be properly considered in fiction, the best novels that focus on cataclysmic events have taken years to develop” (1). To write about 9/11 so soon after the event occurred might result in an overabundance in poorly written fiction that does little more than sensationalize the tragedy. Conlin and Shields make an argument similar to Wyatt’s that 9/11’s influence will eventually blossom in literature, but its legacy and overall impact is still to come.

*9/11’s impact on the publishing industry as well as in the library*

As could be expected, any kind of major event in history is going to create a veritable flood of items that are written about it, ranging from social commentaries to meticulous historical analyses. Unfortunately, the rationale for writing about 9/11 may not be as philanthropic and cathartic as one might think – instead, it’s the publishers that are the driving force behind such works. 9/11 is a clear example of this. As McLeary bluntly states, “publishing is a business just like any other, so it’s not surprising the industry jumped at the chance to increase profits and gain notoriety for its book lists” (2006). As disconcerting as this is, McLeary goes on to state that by the end of 2002,

sixteen titles that related to 9/11 appeared on weekly best seller charts, so obviously there is some truth to such capitalism (2006).

Despite the apparent financial gains to be made as a result of items that are written about 9/11, there is also the arguable responsibility of the publishing industry to preserve the historical record of events such as 9/11. Nelson argues that the publishing industry has an “implicit cultural obligation to chronicle and make sense of historical events that alter human experience” (5). So long as people want to read about what happened on September 11, 2001, the publishing industry owes it to its culture to keep on producing pieces that discuss it. In the long run, Nelson contends that the historical perspectives of 9/11 will ultimately be the most sought after and widely read, perhaps because as more time elapses between 2001 and today, there is a greater sense of objectivity (5).

Still, publishing doesn’t necessarily have to be financially driven to be considered successful. Even the graphic novel industry jumped on the publishing band wagon; both 9-11 Artists Respond and 9-11, The World’s Finest Comic Book Writers and Artists Tell Their Stories to Remember were two books that came out before the end of 2001 and were highly praised by the publishing and graphic novel communities. This kind of immediate response helped audiences deal with their confusion and unsorted emotions, thus cementing these novels into the wider cultural exchange (Library Congress Bulletin 247). Though this paper will focus more on the fiction side of 9/11 publications, the sheer output of items that have been written on the events of that particular day is still remarkable.

As a result of the influx of published materials that relate to 9/11, a dilemma arises within the library community, namely, how does one perform collection management on a subject that is still unraveling? The Library of Congress addressed this issue shortly after 9/11. Their primary goal was to document and record for posterity, obtaining ephemera such as posters and flags as well as newspapers (Kresh 151). Arguably, the Library of Congress's main message to collection managers is to collect "first impression materials" that discuss 9/11 in addition to more standard sources. This sweeping type of collection development ensures that later scholars (or patrons) will have the opportunity to "live through" what so many experienced first-hand (Kresh 154).

This kind of attitude is a central theme to librarianship as well as to collection management. Kresh concludes her article with a particularly apt description about the service duties of libraries and, by extension, librarians: "librarians, as keepers of the public record, have a responsibility to sublimate personal values for the public good and to consider what scholars and researchers of the future may wish to know about what happened today" (155). 9/11 was a significant event in American history and librarians have an obligation to preserve the memories and materials to ensure their cultural relevance and legacy. 9/11 fiction is just one aspect of the growing amount of produced materials and thus, should be given just as much consideration as anything else.

### 3. Methodology

As of March 31, 2006, 79 fiction works have been published that refer to 9/11 in some direct way. Due to time constraints, only fiction items published up through February 15, 2006 will be reviewed for inclusion in this study. The breakdown of the number of works published each year is as follows: 2002 (9), 2003 (24), 2004 (25), 2005 (18), 2006 (3).

Five principal sources were consulted to find the works that will be used in this study: NoveList (database), BooksInPrint (database), Amazon.com (commercial website), BN.com (commercial website) and Book lust: recommended reading for every mood, moment, and reason by Nancy Pearl (Sasquatch Books, 2003). These sources were searched using various combinations and truncations of different search terms: “fiction,” “9/11,” “September 11th,” “September 11, 2001,” “books,” “novel,” along with the Library of Congress subject heading “September 11 Terrorist Attacks, 2001 -- Fiction.” For obvious time-related reasons, searches were limited to works published after 2001.

In order for an item to be considered “9/11 adult fiction” for this study, the work must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- The events of 9/11 occur within the context of the story’s dominant timeline.
- The events of 9/11 are considered the main catalyst for plot advancement.
- The events of 9/11 have already occurred and are specifically referred to at least once.



- The item has been catalogued by the source as Fiction.
- The item has been catalogued under the Library of Congress subject heading “September 11 Terrorist Attacks, 2001 -- Fiction.”

To further refine the study, the publisher/writer’s targeted demographic must be 18 and older. For this project, graphic novels will be considered as adult works rather than for a young adult audience. With regard to the work’s content, off-handed or flippant references to 9/11 will not be considered. Likewise, works that focus primarily on 9/11’s later aftermath will also not be included (e.g. novels that refer to post 9/11 Afghanistan, or that focus on the resulting war in Iraq). The goal of setting this criterion is to create a unified pool of works that ultimately have 9/11 act as a major domestic experience, not just as a peripheral or global event.

The following procedure will apply to all 79 of the selected published works. For this study, reviews, plot synopses and other relevant information about each book will be examined thoroughly, and relevant data will be recorded. Books will be grouped together based on publishing year, primarily to track the growth of the genre. The information collected from each work will be recorded on an analysis form (see Appendix A for sample). For each item, reviews and plot synopses will be combined and the analysis will be broken down into three main areas of study:

1. Bibliographic information: including data about the author (age, gender, career history, publicity), genre of the work (to be classified into one or more of these categories: romance, thriller, suspense, graphic novel, literary fiction, religious/inspirational, or other) and publisher information.

2. Literary treatment of 9/11 as a subject which will include data about the overall plot and emotional tone of the work, character demographics (gender, age, race, socio-economic status, familial relationships), setting (New York, Washington D.C., other), and the implicit and/or explicit references to 9/11 (similar to manifest and/or latent content analysis) and their context.
3. Recurring themes and patterns within genres as well as within the collective body of works that relate to 9/11.

To serve as a starting point for the analysis form, general themes were derived based on skimmed plot readings. It is anticipated that these themes will appear in greater detail as the analysis progresses.

Reviews will be taken from evaluative sources that are used most often by collection development librarians, namely *Publisher's Weekly*, *Library Journal*, *Booklist*, *Choice*, *The New York Times Book Review* and *Kirkus Review*. These sources were chosen based on their noted history for impartial and objective reviews, along with their recommendations as to how a reviewed item relates to a collection as a whole.

There are two main reasons why reviews and plot synopses were chosen for analysis, as opposed to performing a more in depth content analysis on sampled works. First, because the list of adult 9/11 fiction is growing at a phenomenal rate and is only expected to continue to develop, it would be nearly impossible to read every single one of these works for this particular study. Additionally, the relative new-ness of the genre has also not clearly carved out any set formulas or common trends. As was previously stated, it is this study's purpose to create a general taxonomy of the ways in which 9/11 is used

as a subject in adult fiction. Examining reviews and synopses will allow for a broader sense of analysis.

The one drawback to relying on reviews is the potentially unfair advantage that PR and marketing may have over media coverage. In this case, if a particular item was not reviewed by any of the sources listed, either the information provided by the publisher or customer reviews was analyzed in its place. Outside readings of several novels will be utilized as a supplement to review/synopses analysis. The following works have been read for this project:

- Double Vision, Pat Barker
- Windows on the World, Frederic Beigbeder
- Small Town, Lawrence Block
- 9 of 1: A Window to the World, Oliver Chin
- Some Things I Never Thought I'd Do, Pearl Cleage
- Queen of Dreams, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni
- Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close, Jonathan Safran Foer
- Pattern Recognition, William Gibson
- The Usual Rules, Joyce Maynard
- Days of Awe, Hugh Nissenson
- A Risk Worth Taking, Robin Pilcher
- The Good Priest's Son, Reynolds Price
- The Writing on the Wall, Lynne Schwartz
- In the Shadow of No Towers, Art Spiegelman

As such, special attention will be paid to the themes and patterns evident in these works. Ultimately, the end result of this analysis will produce a comprehensive and detailed guide to 9/11's presence in adult contemporary fiction.

## 4. Results and Analysis

### *1. Bibliographic Information about 9/11 fiction*

#### *Author Data*

After removing duplicate names and compilations, 47 out of the 79 works in this study were male, accounting for roughly 65% of the data set. 2004 and 2005 proved to be banner years for 9/11 fiction, producing 31 of the 47 works authored by males. Likewise, female authors accounted for about 35% of the 9/11 fiction genre, peaking in 2003 with 11 works. The overall percentage for females may be skewed due to the repeated appearance by Christian author Karen Kingsbury, who wrote three books in 2003 and one in 2004.

After reviewing this data, it is not surprising to see such a male dominance over this new 9/11 genre. As will be discussed in greater detail shortly, a large portion of 9/11 fiction can be classified in the thriller and suspense genres with a heavy emphasis on revenge, more typically written by males. Perhaps male authors have used 9/11 in their fiction in this particular vein because of an increased sense of anger, frustration and need for justice that can only be expressed through writing violent and suspenseful narratives. For the most part, female authors tend to focus on the interpersonal relationships of characters and their emotional placement within a 9/11 context. It will be interesting to see if this trend continues to develop, or if the percentage evens out as time elapses.

Of the 79 surveyed works, 55 were written by “long time” authors (those who have had more than two works published in their lifetime), which accounts for 72% of the

data set. Some of these writers are well known and widely respected in their genres such as Lawrence Block, Sara Paretsky and Michael Cunningham. Likewise, 18 of the works in this study were written by “new” authors, where the item was his/her debut or sophomore work, accounting for roughly 23% of the data set. 2003 and 2004 were the top two years for long time writers, accounting for 36 of the 79 works in this study. Accordingly, 2005 proved to be the banner year for “new” authors, with 8 of the 79 works.

It is fascinating to see so many long time authors who have used 9/11 as a subject in their works. Since most of their careers have been devoted to writing, maybe these authors felt that the only way to cope personally with the flood of emotion was through prose. Additionally, perhaps these writers might have felt indebted to cover the tragic events of the day as a literary service to their readers. Likewise, one potential reason why so many new authors have used 9/11 in their works was to grab an immediately sympathetic audience. The horrible events of the day brought about a new sense of camaraderie among all Americans who shared the experience. Aside from the potential financial benefits, new authors might have felt compelled to be part of a social legacy by writing about a major cultural experience. Covering such an important subject like 9/11 with grace and tact would lend a great amount of credibility to any up and coming writer.

### *Publishing Data*

After reviewing the data, there were a total of 58 different publishing companies responsible for producing the 79 works in this study. The top four companies were Simon & Schuster, which published five works, St. Martin’s Press, which published four works, and Zondervan and Morrow, which published three. These results should come as

no surprise considering that both Simon & Schuster and St. Martin's Press are two of the top companies in the mainstream publishing industry, while Zondervan is a reputable publisher of Christian and Inspirational literature. Aside from these four companies, it is impressive to see the number and diversity of publishing houses that represent the up and coming fiction, ranging from general houses like Ballantine to more specialized companies like BET. Such variety is evidently an indicator of the broad appeal that the 9/11 genre has over a wide audience. Clearly, each company is determined to carve their literary niche in what appears to be an economically viable market. It is likely that all of these 58 companies are well aware of the financial gains to be made on this new genre and will undoubtedly continue to capitalize on this.

### *Reviews*

It was found that on average, each work was given between two to four reviews by different evaluating sources. *Booklist*, *Publisher's Weekly* and *Library Journal* were the top sources that reviewed the majority of the works surveyed for this study. The one major exception to this is Jonathan Safran Foer's novel Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close, which held an impressive high of 30 reviews. What is so surprising about these numbers is that Foer's novel was published in 2005, yet the amount of publicity lends itself to thinking that it was the first fiction piece to focus on 9/11. However, this couldn't be further from the truth; 2005 produced only 18 fiction works about 9/11. The question then arises as to why Foer's novel received so much media attention when there were over 50 other relevant fiction works published prior to 2005. One potential explanation is that Extremely Loud... was Foer's follow up to his widely successful debut Everything is Illuminated and Houghton Mifflin wanted to attack his market with a

huge media blitz. Foer's rationale seems to be rooted more on the responsibility of the writer as opposed to sheer commercialism:

There are a lot of risks associated with writing about September 11, but... I'd rather bite off more than I can chew than not bite off enough. In a way, the harder question to answer, for me, is 'why isn't everybody writing about it?'... I think people are really afraid of art. But that's not a reason not to push on. (Memmott 2005)

Whatever the motivation, Foer's novel is arguably the most financially successful work to date that uses 9/11 as a major subject. The majority of reviews praised Foer's work quite extensively; perhaps this accounts for its commercial success.

### *Genre Data*

Not surprisingly, there was a great diversity in 9/11 coverage throughout different literary genres. Overall, 2003 and 2004 were the top two years that yielded the most 9/11 fiction works, with a combined total of 49. Literary fiction (e.g. Foer, Pilcher, Cunningham) was the dominant genre in this study, with 33 of the 79 surveyed works accounting for 42% of the data set, peaking in 2005 with 13 works. Suspense and thriller fiction (e.g. Barker, Paretsky) were the next most popular genres that used 9/11, with a combined total of 19 works, accounting for 24% of the data set. Suspense novels slowly grew in popularity, peaking in 2004 with 6 works. The thriller genre proved to be an early literary trend for authors, peaking in 2003 with 7 works and then disappearing entirely from 2004 through 2006. Inspirational or religious genre fiction (e.g. Kingsbury, Price) came in third with 8 works, accounting for 10% of the data set. The remarkable thing about these results is that author Karen Kingsbury was responsible for 4 of these 8 works, clearly dominating the genre with this subject. The remaining breakdown of genres is as follows: Short Stories – 8%, Romance – 6%, Graphic Novels – 6%, and

Mysteries/Science Fiction – 5% of the data set. One reason to account for literary fiction's popularity is it doesn't have a standard formula that most genres possess, instead relying more on character and thematic development in a setting close to reality. Perhaps this is the best genre to deal with 9/11 as a subject because of its sense of realism.

There were several notable trends that developed throughout each year. In 2002 following the direct aftermath of 9/11, thrillers were the most widely used genre that depicted or utilized 9/11 in some form or another. By 2003, suspense novels became quite popular, while literary fiction, romance and mysteries all lagged behind. One possible explanation for this is the fact that the thriller and suspense genres rely more on plot rather than character development. These genres are also focused on more universal themes of revenge, justice, politics as well as national pride. It makes sense that in the immediate years that followed 9/11, authors as well as readers would take comfort in works that reflected Americans' sense of violation and desire for vengeance. 2002 marked a boom for short stories, probably because it was too soon after 9/11 for authors to even consider using 9/11 in a larger novel. As time elapsed, other genres started to become well represented, perhaps because writers were starting to view 9/11 with a broader social perspective.



## *2. Literary Treatment of 9/11 fiction*

### *Setting*

When it comes to 9/11 fiction, the United States is the dominant choice of setting for authors. In this study, 61 of the 79 works took place in the United States, which accounts for 77% of the data set. More specifically, New York proved to be the lead setting for these domestic works. Of these 61 works, 38 of them occurred in the Empire state, which roughly accounts for 63% of the data set. The use of a United States setting was a strong trend, occurring significantly throughout the past five years. Additionally, other states that were represented in this study were Massachusetts, North Carolina, Washington D.C., Pennsylvania, Michigan and California.

Likewise, European settings accounted for about 12% of the works in this study, including industrialized countries like England and France. Settings in non-European countries accounted for roughly 4% of the works in this study, with places such as Japan and Russia. The usage of foreign settings peaked in 2003 and 2004 with 10 works, then disappeared from the literature altogether. This might be attributed to the correlated relationship between genre and setting. One example of this occurs within the thriller and/or suspense genres, which tend to take place in exotic locales. As the number of thrillers and suspense works began to decline, literary fiction items rose and these works were generally set within places in the United States.

It is fairly intuitive why the United States is a popular setting for American authors – it provides a common ground for understanding and comprehension among all readers who experienced the traumas of 9/11. After all, the four hijacked planes all crashed on American soil. Setting a fiction piece anywhere else might alienate readers.

Still, it is important that some authors discuss 9/11 within an international setting, so as to gain a wider perspective of the event itself and its overall global consequences.

The one notable work that utilizes both a US and European setting is Frederic Beigbeder's novel Windows on the World. Receiving France's Prix Interallie award in 2003, the novel depicts a family's last breakfast together at the glitzy World Trade Center restaurant on the morning of 9/11. The book shifts back and forth between the events of the day in New York with the narrator's personal reactions to 9/11 in France four years later. Beigbeder is one of a scant minority of European writers who have chosen to address 9/11 at all as a literary subject. His publicity often serves more as a defense of his choice of subject matter:

A novel makes the event more real than the image. I wrote this for the French. My first goal was to make them understand 9/11. I think people did not understand the American reaction to that morning. (Memmott 2005)

Since Beigbeder's work has received such positive critical acclaim, it will be interesting to see if other foreign writers follow suit with their own country's perspective of 9/11.

#### *9/11's placement within the work*

After analyzing the data, there was an unanticipated balance with regard to 9/11's placement within the work. Excluding short story series, 33 works in this study featured a natural timeline that included events both before and during 9/11, roughly accounting for 43% of the data set, peaking in 2004, with 12 works. Likewise, 40 out of 79 works in this study were set in a post-9/11 world, relying on heavy usage of flashback narratives, roughly accounting for 52% of the data set. Between 2003 and 2004, the trend reached its apex, with a combined total of 27 works. Finally, 2005 was the only year in which the

number of works that were set before and during 9/11 surpassed the number of works set post 9/11.

What makes this section of analysis so remarkable is its near-symmetry. As has been previously discussed, tackling such a weighty subject like 9/11 requires a certain amount of literary discipline as well as sensitivity. There are obvious advantages and disadvantages to using each setting. One would think that it might be “easier” for a writer to set his work in a post-9/11 world and merely allude to it. That so many authors are willing to directly venture into such an emotional battlefield by setting their works amidst the chaos of 9/11 is quite admirable. These authors obviously want to show their readers just how unexpected the event was and having the novel unfold alongside 9/11 demonstrates the sense of immediate chaos felt by society.

Likewise, authors who set their works in a post-9/11 society have the monumental task of providing a more objective and level headed perspective of the event by relying on flashbacks alone. The concept of memory has never been more important or socially relevant than for authors who decide to use a post-9/11 setting. Because memory has a tendency of filling in mental gaps, it’s crucial for authors of the post 9/11 literary world to take this possibility of inaccuracy into account. In light of this, the authors who set their works in a post 9/11 world are enabled with creative license with their characters’ emotional development because they themselves have mentally recovered from the events of that day and know how the post-9/11 society really operates.

### *Main Characters*

With one exception, the results of this particular section of the study are not at all surprising. In the data analysis, it was quite difficult to ascertain characters’ ethnicities

and/or religious beliefs, though it would be fair to say that the majority of characters were white and middle class. There were obviously some exceptions, though those were clearly identified as such (e.g. African American genre fiction). Despite this area of confusion, the data for male versus female protagonists proved to be as equally balanced as that of 9/11's placement within the work. Male leads were found in 30 out of the 79 surveyed works, accounting for 38% of the data set, peaking with 9 works in 2005. Similarly, female leads were found in 28 of the 79 surveyed works, accounting for 36% of the data set. In 2003, as there was an increase in the number of female authors, there was a corresponding increase in female protagonists. Female protagonists had a strong surge in number in 2003, with a notable 12 works. The fact that these numbers are so closely matched is impressive, though it should be noted that the genres in which these characters appear in probably has more of an influence than anything else. Thriller and suspense genres have a tendency to showcase strong male leads, while romances and/or literary fiction focus primarily on the woman's point of view. Still, despite the genre handicap, it's quite telling that both genders are equally represented in 9/11 fiction; it goes to show the representation truly reflects society's demographics.

Though the original intent for this section was to focus primarily on a sole protagonist and/or narrator, it was found that a fair number of 9/11 works consisted of an ensemble cast rather than one particular individual. Of the 79 surveyed works, 21 had both female and male lead characters, accounting for 27% of the data set. This trend peaked in 2004 with 10 works, surpassing the numbers of both male and female single protagonists for the year. These groups appeared most often in literary fiction works, as opposed to specific genres. These groups were tightly knit, consisting primarily of

familial units (e.g. spouses) or friends. These numbers prove to be just as relevant as the data about female/male protagonists. As was discussed earlier, 9/11 affected individuals as well as the community. Because of this unique collective experience, it makes sense that authors would want to capture this sentiment by using as many characters as possible in their works. Such a decision enables the writer to posit a variety of emotions, as well as perspectives on the events of the day. Additionally, by creating a network of characters, it also allows the author to show just how influential 9/11 was on both the development and the destruction of social networks.

#### *Overall Presence in the Work*

While the parameters of what was considered “9/11” fiction were deliberately left vague for this study, it was amazing to see how various authors interpreted the same event and to what extent. Excluding short story compilations, 26 of the 79 works made a major allusion to the events that took place on 9/11, accounting for 34% of the data set. These were mainly explicit references made by the author, or in the case where the work was set both before and during 9/11, the bulk of the plot and/or character development was centered on dealing with its immediacy. This trend peaked during 2003 and 2004 with a combined total of 18 works.

In a similar vein, it was found that 33 of the 79 works focused on the 9/11’s direct consequences, roughly accounting for 43% of the data set. This trend occurred primarily among works with a post 9/11 setting, in which the references to 9/11 were implicit. Works in the thriller and suspense genres embodied this trend – the main plot takes place specifically because of 9/11. Works that were set both before and during 9/11 were also included in this group, but only if the bulk of the work dealt with 9/11’s long term

consequences. Analogous to the explicit data, this trend peaked in 2003-2004, with a combined total of 21 works. It does make some sense why the numbers for this trend are slightly higher than those of explicit references. Perhaps in the wake of disaster, people don't necessarily want to relive the experience of 9/11 all over again in fiction; instead, they'd rather read about how other people survived the tragedy along with hopeful tales of recovery.

Finally, the number of works that set 9/11 on the periphery was relatively low, with only 14 of the 79 works having minor references to the events of the day, accounting for 18% of the data set. These works may have discussed 9/11 at some point, but the overall focus was not on the events of that day. Numbers for this trend were steady throughout the past four years and it is anticipated that as more time elapses, this trend will only increase. Perhaps authors in the future will not be afraid to make brief mentions of 9/11 without being expected to go into full detail about the emotional toil of the event. Such intimations will be understated enough to imply more than what has been written and said now.

### *3. Recurring Themes in 9/11 fiction*

Before going into further discussion, it's important to remember that there is some obvious overlapping between each concept in this analysis. Keywords and phrases that comprised the works' plot synopses and reviews were the primary factors that determined the work's placement within the study's classification schema. The following themes were found most frequently across a wide variety of genres. Certain aspects of these themes may not have been intended by the author, but proved to be directly relevant for the purposes of this particular study.

#### *Psychological Elements*

Without a doubt, the most frequently depicted theme in 9/11 fiction was that of its range of psychological effects on character development. Because of its inherent subjective nature, any keywords, phrases or labels that referred to a character's emotional or psychological condition were taken into consideration for this theme. Of the 79 surveyed works, 59 contained either some elements of psychological distress or an examination of a character's mental and emotional state. Roughly this accounts for 62% of the data set, making this the most commonly used subject theme in 9/11 fiction. The theme peaked in 2004 with an impressive 22 works. Such a high percentage can be easily understood considering how damaging and persistent 9/11 was in public events and discourse. In general, not many people could watch or read about mass chaos, fire and death without being emotionally affected by it. The fact that the media coverage was near constant during the first few weeks added to the psychological strain. As evidenced

in this type of fiction, people handle stress in a variety of ways. And so, just as the human psyche is multi-faceted, so are the subsets to this study.

Of the 59 works that dealt with the psychological effects of 9/11, 47 related in some way to a character's sense of grief, anguish, or trauma, accounting for 80% of the data subset. This trend has proven to be quite consistent throughout the past four years, peaking in 2004 with 15 works and was popular among the literary fiction genre. Such grief was depicted with a multitude of behaviors, ranging from bitter anger to severe depression to blasé apathy. In many cases, characters exhibited a wide spectrum of these emotions all in the span of one work. Despite the literary variants such as characters' gender, socioeconomic status, race, as well as obvious plot differences, all of the works in this data set contained a sense of unexpected and seemingly interminable despair.

Regardless of the physical manifestation, the overarching sentiment felt by all of the characters was that of sadness as well as a struggle to accept their present situation. Characters' coping mechanisms possessed great variety as well, ranging from severe memory loss as seen in Shrop, the Hungarian immigrant in Paul West's novel The Immensity of the Here and Now, to bleak despondency demonstrated by adolescent protagonist Wendy in Joyce Maynard's novel The Usual Rules. Maynard offers a particularly cogent passage that highlights Wendy's depression, though the emotions expressed can be just as applicable to any grieving character:

In September, everything she loved – songs on the radio and clothes and flavors of ice cream and types of dogs, leaf piles and roller coasters and skating and Japanese animation movies and sushi and shopping and the clarinet and splashing in the waves at Nantucket with her brother – had melted away, not gone maybe, but this was almost worse: still there, but robbed of any capacity to give pleasure... like what happens when you mix all the wonderful colors of paint and it turns out that together what they add up to is brown. (227)



There has been much documentation to prove people (New Yorkers or otherwise) were affected psychologically as well as psychosomatically by 9/11. As such, works of fiction that center on 9/11 but don't pay address these effects offer little credibility to any author. It's arguable that if an author chooses to write a fiction work about 9/11, he/she should be well prepared to discuss negative, bleak and depressing ideas, as well as any other intended themes. To do anything less would be completely inaccurate.

In addition to mental and psychological anguish, it was found that 9/11 fiction offers varied interpretations of death as well as man's mortality. Of the 59 works that deal with psychological themes, 31 of them focus primarily on issues of mortality, spirituality and the reevaluation of one's life goals, accounting for 53% of the data subset. These themes occurred mainly in works that were set in a post-9/11 world and featured predominantly in the literary fiction and inspirational genres.

This idea of man's recognition of his mortality was faced in the immediate sense by many individuals during 9/11. Though this perspective was only used by a few works mainly in 2004, some authors did place their characters inside the World Trade Center or on one of the four planes, keeping the narrative focus on their last moments alive. As gruesome as this is, it addresses the reality of the situation during 9/11. In works where characters were not placed in immediate danger during 9/11, the emphasis was more on the reevaluation of the character's priorities rather than on death itself. This scenario usually occurred in works that were set shortly after 9/11. A relevant example of this occurs in Robin Pilcher's novel A Risk Worth Taking, where the British protagonist quits his stressful executive job after watching the constant 9/11 media coverage in order to strengthen his relationship with his family. Clearly, there's nothing like a major tragedy

to serve as a reality check for someone to start appreciating life again. In many of the works surveyed for this study, characters used 9/11 as an incentive to make positive changes to their lives. Evidently, many authors use 9/11 to make their characters understand the potential transience of human life.

Furthermore, this study found an interesting parallel relationship between the subject of death and mortality with that of spirituality and religion – namely as a character’s attention to one increased, so did the other. With the exception of works from the inspirational genre, many works of literary fiction held this similar trait; the mention of God or a character’s spiritual beliefs was almost never addressed without a brief segue into a character’s personal worries about death. A cogent example of this occurs in Frederic Beigbeder’s novel Windows on the World. Though the bulk of the work is not spent on religious concepts, when the narrator contemplates the potential threat of death, he notes: “in those moments of terror, prayer comes to us unbidden. Religion is reborn in us. In the minutes ahead, the World Trade Center, a temple to atheism and to international lucre, will gradually become a makeshift church” (127). Such a dualism suggests perhaps a more secularized split in American fiction where writers do not want to address spirituality unless it pertains to a character’s life goals or eventual demise. To discuss religion and spiritual issues in a work of fiction without alienating readers requires almost as much tact and sensitivity as that of discussing 9/11. It’s not surprising that many authors choose to combine the two taboo subjects.

Following this notion of controversial subjects, another significant trend in 9/11 fiction is a character’s frequent desire for revenge or justice. Of the 59 works that contained psychological elements, 11 pertained to the idea of a character seeking

vengeance against the terrorists, accounting for 19% of the data subset. This trend was quite popular in the immediate years following 9/11, and featured prominently in the thriller and suspense genres. Many of the works that had elements of revenge were either very graphic in depictions of violence or else featured an ultra patriotic sentiment.

Lawrence Block's novel Small Town serves as a relevant example of both concepts.

Block's thriller focuses on a serial killer whose family was killed in the World Trade Center on 9/11. His grief is insurmountable, both for the loss of his family as well as for the destruction of his beloved city. In an effort to purify both his soul as well as New York's, he kills several individuals:

They were the city, New York, sacrificing itself for its own greater glory. They were a ritual bloodletting by means of which the city's soul was redeemed and renewed, rising from its own psychic ashes to be reborn greater than it had been before...The people he'd killed had been sacrificed to the city of New York...so that others of their countrymen could follow them here and live and thrive and prosper (120-121).

Other works that feature revenge aren't as indiscriminating about who must die to compensate for one's loss. As could be expected, many works purposely depicted Americans fighting against members of terrorist groups, though this trend was found mostly in political thrillers.

For other genres, the notion of revenge served as a much needed form of closure for many characters. Though 9/11 was indeed quite tragic and horrifying, what it lacked was a resounding end. The fact that revenge appears so often in 9/11 fiction is indicative of the futility and frustration that was felt by so many Americans. Perhaps authors use revenge in their works as an attempt to create some form of personal justice; maybe having fictional characters who successfully execute their vengeance represents a small

victory in reality. It is anticipated that this trend will continue to be steadily represented in the thriller and suspense genres, but will taper out in all others.

### *Interpersonal Relationships*

Though 9/11 was an intensely tragic event that scarred a nation, one of the few positive effects it had was strengthening the sense of community and solidarity among all Americans. In the weeks that followed the attack, there was a general sense of kindness and empathy that pervaded both the individual and collective social network. This wasn't even restricted to the United States; heartfelt condolences were extended by many foreign countries, along with a promise to help find and fight the executors of the event. This intensification of the human bond is also quite evident in much of the 9/11 fiction surveyed for this study. Of the 79 works, 48 focused on the development or deterioration of interpersonal relationships as a result of 9/11, accounting for roughly 62% of the data set. This trend was quite consistent, peaking in 2004 with an impressive 16 works. Generally, this theme was evident most often in the literary fiction, romance and inspirational genres. As can be expected, there were several variations to this theme, resulting in three major subsets from the 48 works.

One way that many authors in this study depicted interpersonal relationships was through the family unit. Out of the 48 relevant works, 36 were focused on the changes to the familial relationship, accounting for 75% of the data subset. This trend was quite common in 9/11 fiction throughout the past four years.

Much of the literature that dealt with family relations centered on two ideas - the loss of a family member due to 9/11 and the consequent mourning that the remaining members must endure. With the exception of a few works (e.g. Philip Beard's debut

novel Dear Zoe), all of the deaths in 9/11 fiction were adult members of the unit. The role of this member ranged from spouse to parent to extended family and there was an even split between female and male deaths. As can be expected, when a parental figure died as a result of 9/11, the protagonist or narrator was usually a younger character (like Oskar Schnell in Foer's Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close); likewise, if a spouse or fiancé died, the protagonist was usually older (like William Boyce Harbinger in Lawrence Block's Small Town.) Surprisingly, all of the familial units were heterosexual couples, though perhaps this will change in future fiction. Overall, the main result of the works that dealt with familial units was that acceptance of the loss was resignedly made by individual members of the family, though the unit itself was often badly damaged in the process. However in most cases, there was an overarching element of healing involved with the grieving process often through psychotherapy.

The fact that the numbers in this subset are so high indicate the trend that authors see 9/11 as a communal experience rather than a purely personal one. Though every individual has his/her own recollection of the day, everyone was shocked and hurt by the events. These feelings transcend the individual and have ultimately changed the dynamics and emotions of even the most basic familial unit. Interpersonal relationships are not static and temporary; the ones in fiction shouldn't be either. It's helpful that the fiction reflects this reality as well as explains the emotional healing process that is inevitable for coping with such loss. It would be completely unrealistic and wrong of authors to not identify this tragedy for the American family; by acknowledging the sad truth of 9/11's high death toll, it helps the rest of us appreciate what we have as well as sympathize with those who have permanently lost a vital part of their lives.

Following the tragedy of 9/11, people clung to one another in an effort to combat loneliness as well as to create a feeling of security amidst chaos. Such bonds frequently led to newfound romantic and sexual relationships. Such occurrences can be found in many 9/11 fiction works as well. Of the 48 works that deal with interpersonal relationships, it was found that 21 contained some elements of romance or sexual encounters, accounting for roughly 44% of the data set. 2003 and 2004 marked the peak of this trend and this occurred most frequently in the romance and literary fiction genres. In some cases, 9/11 serves as a catalyst for the relationship, as seen in Jay McInerney's novel The Good Life, or else the event becomes a test to the relationship, as in Charles Deemer's novel Love at Ground Zero. Sadly, 9/11 was of course responsible for causing the end of many romantic relationships, as seen in Pearl Cleage's work Some Things I'd Never Thought I'd Do, in which the protagonist's fiancé is killed during 9/11.

The fact that romance is so prevalent in 9/11 fiction should come as no surprise to anyone because after all, nothing bonds people together quite like a tragedy. This study found that most of the romantic relationships in the sample developed solely as a result of 9/11. Because this occurred so frequently, it is arguable that 9/11 runs the risk of becoming trivialized by some authors. In some of the works in this study, the events of 9/11 seemed to serve primarily as a background to the characters' relationship, which can be cheap and insensitive. Fortunately, other authors used 9/11 much more effectively because they showed the characters' evolution throughout the tragedy and the consequent relationship occurs in a proper context.

In terms of sexual activity in the works surveyed, it was found that couples either engaged in sexual intercourse more frequently after 9/11 or else abstained altogether.

Sex scenes ranged in description and usually focused more on the act itself rather than the emotional exchange between partners. With regards to the appearance of sex in 9/11 works, art definitely reflects reality. After 9/11 occurred, people obviously sought out the emotional comfort of another warm and understanding body. There's a common notion that people become more aroused when confronted by death because they are reminded of their own mortality; sex is important to humans because it makes them feel alive. Clearly, authors of 9/11 fiction recognize this inherent human desire and use it quite extensively in their works. The fact that sex scenes were described so vividly is rather shocking, but not entirely unexpected. What is disturbing, however, is the lack of emotional connection that many characters had with their sexual partners. Instead, the focus was more on the animalistic element of the act, rather than an act of love and emotion. Thus, it is rather disheartening to see so many romantic relationships in 9/11 fiction that don't appear to have any depth to them.

Serving as a proper contrast to romantic relationships is the prevalence of friendship in 9/11 fiction. Out of the 48 works that focus on interpersonal relationships, 10 deal directly with the development and maintenance of friendship between characters, roughly accounting for 21% of the data subset. This trend has been growing steadily since 2003 and continues to occur even into 2006 fiction. The majority of these friendships were same sex, though perhaps this trend will change in future fiction.

After reviewing the works, this theme of friendship usually occurred in one of two settings: either a relationship between two characters (formerly strangers) began as a result of 9/11, or else the friendship was destroyed by the death and/or disappearance of one character during or post-9/11. Both scenarios were usually accompanied by

psychological elements, mainly sorrow and a reevaluation of life's priorities. As a direct contrast to the capriciousness of romantic relationships in 9/11 fiction, friendship between characters is often portrayed in a very strong and pure light. There is no sense of falseness amongst characters who are friends, only shared feelings of grief.

It is this very difference that sets friendship far apart from the other subsets in this theme. The evidence of fiction implies that the foundation of friendship is rooted in equality and empathy. After 9/11, people who suffered great personal losses likely didn't want or need to be pitied by strangers. Instead, what they probably sought were relationships that involved compassion and solidarity. It makes sense that authors would incorporate such themes into works that deal with 9/11 because the scenario called for it. It's logical to see that in works where friendship occurs as a result of 9/11, the characters accepted their losses more easily than those characters whose friendships ended as a result of 9/11. Again, it is significant that both aspects of friendship, namely its birth and death, are explored in these works to accurately portray what readers unfortunately faced in their realities.

### *Political Elements*

As one might expect with fiction that was spawned from a politically motivated attack on America, many of the surveyed works proved to have some political elements. Such themes were not uncommon, considering that they appeared most often in the thriller and suspense genres. Of the 79 works surveyed, 24 spend much of the time dealing with some aspects of politics, accounting for 31% of the data set. 2003 and 2004 were the peak years for this trend, possibly in direct response to the United States' declared "war on terrorism" in March of 2003. There were several subsets to this theme



within the 24 works, all of which were equally well represented and popular among genre writers.

One of the understandable subsets to this theme is that of the government and military's presence in 9/11 fiction. Of the 24 works that featured some kind of political element, 14 of them had an emphasis on the government and/or military, accounting for 58% of the data subset. This trend has been reasonably steady for the past four years, despite declining somewhat in 2005. Ranging from Secret Service agents in P.T. Deutermann's The Firefly to former CIA members in Dee Henderson's True Honor, the government and military play integral parts in works that contain political elements and are often intertwined with many other aspects of politics. Both the thriller and suspense genres often use the government and/or the military to serve as plot points, background settings or character agendas. In many of these works, the government is seen as all powerful and clearly more intelligent than its enemies. In the end, the government or the characters that represent it usually triumph.

For 9/11 fiction, it makes sense that authors of these genres would rely heavily on incorporating the government into their works because it is likely that readers would want to know about the United States' retaliatory plans. The average American citizen can't do much to fight terrorism as a whole, but a nation's government and military stand more of a chance. The events of 9/11 left Americans feeling frustrated and helpless, looking to the government for justice and protection. Authors are well aware of this sense of trust on the government and as such, have incorporated this into their works. It is extremely telling that there is usually a victory on America's behalf in many of these works.

Something that illustrates this trust in the government is the frequent mention of defense in 9/11 fiction. Again, probably as a response to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, war is a commonly used device. The works that dealt with war themes weren't necessarily focusing on combat; instead the concentration was more on political strategies and war's overall consequences. Of the 24 works that had political elements, 10 had some component of war, accounting for 42% of the data subset and occurred most frequently in the thriller and suspense genres. In such works as The Warlord's Son by Dan Fesperman, the war in question was in Afghanistan, while others like The First Terrorist Act by Harold Thomas Beck or Trumpet at Twisp by Doris Elaine Fell discussed previous wars like the Gulf War and Vietnam in comparison to 9/11. Characters in Ward Carroll's techno thriller Punk's Wing go so far as to protect civilians from the Taliban. However, very seldom was the war in Iraq specifically mentioned, despite authors' usage of the phrase "the war on terrorism." Because it is so soon after the event, it is expected that the future literature will address this absence.

It was found that a large portion of the works that dealt with political themes also dealt with aspects of security. Of the 24 works with political elements, 10 concentrated mainly on this idea of preservation and security, accounting for 42% of the data subset. Again, this theme was seen most often in the thriller and suspense genres and peaked in 2004 with a total of 6 works. In these works, security usually focused on the idea of prevention – whether it's against computer network leaks like in Bruce Sterling's techno thriller The Zenith Angle, internal espionage like John Weisman's Jack in the Box or even against al Qaeda.

The fact that this theme is prevalent among 9/11 fiction is unsurprising considering that 9/11 showed a powerful nation what it felt like to be vulnerable. It makes sense that authors would pay a lot of attention to this concept of the nation's safety and self preservation. In the wake of the wars against Afghanistan and Iraq following 9/11, Americans wanted to be certain that such a tragedy would never happen again and that they would be ready for any future incidents. Many of the works in this subset deal directly with possible future al Qaeda attacks on American soil. Christopher Dickey's novel The Sleeper deals with the terrorist group's potential invasion in Kansas (unlikely as that may be), while Kyle Mills' Sphere of Influence has an FBI agent trying to stop al Qaeda from striking again. What these works provide is a sense of assurance to readers that the individuals who caused 9/11 will pay. Because these works are so slanted in the United States' favor, it could be argued that they serve no other thematic purpose than to be jingoistic declarations of American superiority. Or maybe readers just want to see America emerge triumphant over "evil," thus explaining the subset's popularity.

This concept of malevolence in 9/11 fiction is expressed quite often with the frequent presence of terror. In this study, it was found that 16 out of the 24 politically oriented works had major references to terrorists and/or terrorism itself, accounting for a whopping 67% of the data subset. The attack obviously provided authors with ample amounts of material at their disposal. After all, there is no better antagonist in literature than the "terrorist," who is hell bent on destroying innocent lives for their own evil and sacrilegious cause. Further, because the individuals responsible for 9/11 were not American, white, or practicing members of a Judeo-Christian religious sect, writers were seemingly blessed with a nicely divergent villain for their novels. One of the

observations about the works in this data subset is that the term “terrorist” was used rampantly, yet is vague. However, in this post 9/11 world the term denotes so much that an author need not add a lot of extemporaneous details beyond the word. John Nance’s novel Turbulence is a great example of this, in which it is suspected that “terrorists” are aboard an aircraft that crashes in war torn Nigeria. The thriller is set in a post 9/11 world, so it is implied that these terrorists are Islamic fundamentalists. The fact that the term “terrorist” is thrown about so loosely seems dangerous to the literature. While the purpose of fiction is to entertain the reader, it’s imperative not to overuse this term, lest it becomes a cheap stereotype instead of a specifically chosen literary device.

### *Heroism*

The events’ aftermath brought about a change in social perspective regarding moral behaviors like bravery, cowardice and justice. Such virtues like heroism became mirrored in these 9/11 fiction works. Fifteen of the 79 works surveyed for this study were found to have some elements of heroism, in which a character shows great courage in a particular situation or takes action to protect, defend or serve on behalf of someone else. This trend roughly accounted for 19% of the data set, and appeared most often in the thriller, suspense and romance genres.

The remarkable aspect about this theme was that heroism was perceived more in terms of profession instead of physical acts. The interesting thing about the data for this group is its direct relationship with genres as well as setting. Of the 15 works that could be classified as having heroic elements, 6 of them had protagonists who served as private investigators or detectives, accounting for 40% of this data set. In the thriller and

suspense genres, these characters were set with a challenge to uncover a mystery that had some connection with 9/11.

Similarly, 3 of the 15 works in this set had protagonists who were affiliated with some governmental agency, accounting for 20% of the data set. In these works, characters were given a politically based mission to accomplish, usually against terrorists or in some specific cases, al Qaeda. Characters like these appeared most often in the thriller, suspense and mystery genres. In all of these instances, heroic status was achieved only if the protagonist succeeded with his/her task.

In contrast, 5 of the 15 works had protagonists who served as firefighters during 9/11, accounting for 30% of the data set. It was found that these characters appeared most often in the romance, inspirational and literary fiction genres. The interesting thing about this group is that the character was given hero status solely of his/her occupation and efforts during 9/11. It does make sense that this group would be a clearly defined demographic in 9/11 fiction since firefighters were some of the most widely lauded individuals during 9/11.

After analyzing the works, these results are quite telling in that they all represent an underlying social and literary emphasis on action and achieving positive results when considering what determines true heroism. Because 9/11 was such an unexpected event, society looked up to individuals who were able to make some sense to the chaos and bring order to the masses. Having protagonists who succeed in their 9/11 related tasks or challenges could represent the author's desire for justice against the "enemy," as well as an immense appreciation for such bravery. After 9/11, many individuals felt a sense of

helplessness and loss of control. So it is not surprising that heroism would be such a dominant theme in 9/11 fiction; we all simply wanted to feel protected and safe again.

### *Social Aspects*

Of 9/11's many consequences, none was as hurtful as that of the increased racial hostilities against Muslims. In analyzing the works for this study, racism amongst Muslims was presented often in fictional settings. It was found that 5 of the 79 surveyed works had intense themes of racial prejudice and discrimination against certain characters, most of whom were either Muslim or Arab, accounting for 6% of the data set. Such hostility ranged from simple verbal assault to hate crimes to actual violence. This trend occurred most frequently in 2003 and 2004, though this could probably be attributed to the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Unfortunately, the racial tension that exists in 9/11 fiction is not wholly unexpected. After 9/11 occurred and the perpetrators were identified, Muslims immediately became the nation's scapegoat. By writing about such prejudice, these works will serve as a reminder of what the cultural mindset was immediately following 9/11. These authors are not condoning society's prejudices against this particular group of people; they are merely depicting racism to make their works a truer reflection of their society.

This type of social commentary is arguably more implicitly critical of 9/11, perhaps because the event happened all too recently. However, in other cases, the commentary is much more blatant. In two of the graphic novels surveyed, the authors spend the bulk of the work asking questions as to why 9/11 occurred, positing that the United States' relationships with other countries served as potential motives for the

terrorists. It is somewhat strange that out of all 79 works surveyed for this study, only 2 critically analyzed the reasons behind 9/11. The fact that the two works were of the same genre is even more telling. Though both novels were fictional works, the pieces went so far as to caricaturize President George Bush along with other members of his cabinet. Perhaps graphic novels are the only acceptable genre to get away with such caustic commentary because of their seemingly childish design. Regular publishing houses probably are not as willing to publish fiction works that are so covertly critical, simply because they might not turn as large of a profit. Regardless, it will be interesting to see if this scathing criticism continues to surface in future 9/11 fiction works; with current political situations as they are, such disapproval will undoubtedly be inevitable.

## **5. Conclusions**

This study has shown the various trends in 9/11 fiction. As expected, a variety of literary genres were represented, along with an equal distribution of male and female writers. It was also found that many of these works have been quietly but regularly reviewed by a number of reliable selection resources. Additionally, it was established that psychological themes and interpersonal relationships were the patterns of choice among fiction writers, mainly because 9/11 proved to be such a unifying and horrific experience. However, it was unexpected that little literary attention was paid to the plane crashes in Washington D.C. or Pennsylvania, though perhaps this will be remedied in future fiction.

Consequently, it will be interesting to see how 9/11 is used in future works of literature. Due to recent disapproval with the Bush administration, we might expect that there will be an increase in works that provide social commentary, as they examine 9/11's long term psychological effects. To date, 9/11 has led to America's direct participation in two wars, resulting in the loss of thousands of individuals. The emotions resulting from these wars will undoubtedly be transferred into future popular fiction as well. It is clear that 9/11 will never stop being socially, culturally and politically relevant in American history. Similar to Vietnam's legacy on American politics, the events of 9/11 will undoubtedly remain forever ingrained in the historical perspective, mainly because so many individuals were affected. It is likely that 9/11's aftereffects will



continue to linger in American politics and social narrative; the fiction that results from this will obviously reflect the changing attitudes and social mind frames.

As a future librarian interested in popular fiction and seeking a professional career in collection development, I believe that it is imperative that libraries provide not only what readers want in the immediate sense, but also that collections possess materials that accurately reflect all major cultural and social experiences. It is without question that libraries have already begun to collect non fiction works that are directly relevant to explaining 9/11. However, it is my contention that 9/11 fiction is a growing genre, and as such, should be taken into serious consideration for purposeful development by librarians who are responsible for collection maintenance. Obviously, the selection and acquisition practices can be altered to suit individual geography and/or patrons' reading interests, but it is crucial that every public library have some coverage in this area. It is also recommended that academic libraries holding strong American history collections collect 9/11 fiction as well, as this might be beneficial for future American Studies scholars interested in 9/11 based cultural perspectives.

With all the current publicity surrounding Jonathan Safran Foer's novel and upcoming film option, fiction that discusses 9/11 has just begun to emerge in the public eye. This study was successful in proving that there is indeed a niche of 9/11 fiction. It would be one thing if there were only a few works that mention 9/11 – this just might be a fluke and nothing more than a random occurrence. But 9/11 occurred just five years ago and close to 100 works of relevant fiction have been produced. It is anticipated that, similar to World War I and II, this trend in fiction will only increase as time passes and authors gain a greater sense of perspective and objectivity. Fiction works about 9/11 will

eventually serve as a social reminder of not only a historic event, but also of a major cultural catastrophe. People will always need to know what transpired on that day; for the future generations that weren't alive during the time, it is fiction that will provide significant evidence.

In his novel Windows on the World, Frederic Beigbeder offers a final note on the importance of writing about 9/11 in a fictive sense: "the moral of the story is: when buildings vanish, only books can remember them. This is why Hemingway wrote about Paris before he died. Because he knew that books are more permanent than buildings" (137). Ultimately, this wisdom will hold true for the World Trade Center as well. It is with great hope that 9/11 fiction will continue to support and comfort readers for many generations to come. Perhaps the possibility of future awareness and cultural enlightenment will eventually compensate for a small fraction of the sheer tragedy that affected America on that day.

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## Appendix A – Sample Form Used to Record Data

TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 AUTHOR: \_\_\_\_\_  
 PUBLISHER: \_\_\_\_\_

YEAR: \_\_\_\_\_

### I. Bibliographic Information

#### A. Author Information

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Debut or Long time writer

#### B. Genre

1. Romance
2. Thriller
3. Suspense
4. Graphic Novel
5. Literary Fiction
6. Religious/Inspirational
7. Mystery

#### C. Publicity

1. Awards won?
2. Reviewed where?

### II. Literary Treatment of 9/11

#### A. Plot – Natural timeline

1. Before and During 9/11
2. After 9/11 has occurred
3. Referred to by flashbacks

#### B. References to event

1. Implicit
2. Explicit
3. Consequences of 9/11 affect overall themes/character/plot development

#### C. Demographics of main characters

1. Socioeconomic status
2. Race
3. Gender
4. Age

D. Setting

1. U.S.
2. Europe

III. General Themes Present

- A. Interpersonal Relationships
- B. Psychology
- C. Heroism
- D. Political influences/aspects
- E. Social influences/aspects

## Appendix B – List of Surveyed Works

### Literary Fiction

- Charlotte Vale Allen, Sudden Moves. Don Mills, Ont: Mira, 2004.
- Robert Anderson, Little fugue: a novel. New York: Ballantine Books, 2004.
- Pat Barker, Double Vision. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003.
- Philip Beard, Dear Zoe. New York: Viking, 2005.
- Frederic Beigbeder, Windows on the World. New York: Miramax Books, 2005.
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- Ron Calugar, Sanctuary: a Quest for Freedom. U.S.: Abuys Inc. Publishing, 2002.
- Michael Cunningham, Specimen Days. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.
- Patty Dann, Sweet and Crazy. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003.
- Raymond Deeb, The Day that Lady Liberty Cried. Lulu Press, 2005.
- Charles Deemer, Love at Ground Zero: a novel. US: Three Moons Media, 2004.
- Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Queen of Dreams: a novel. New York: Doubleday, 2004.
- Rubram Fernandez, September 11 From the Inside: a novel. New York: Iuniverse, 2003.
- Jonathan Safran Foer, Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005.
- Pete Hamill, Forever. Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Co., 2003.
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Jeff Neugroschel, Emergence of Hope. Baltimore: Publish America, 2002.

Hugh Nissenson, The Days of Awe. Naperville, Ill: Sourcebooks, 2005.

Robin Pilcher, A Risk Worth Taking. New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2004.

Reynolds Price, The Good Priest's Son. New York: Scribner, 2005.

Nicholas Rinaldi, Between Two Rivers. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2004.

Lynne Schwartz, The Writing on the Wall: a novel. New York: Counterpoint, 2005.

Frank Senauth, A Day of Terror: The Sagas of 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001. Victoria, B.C.: Trafford Publishing, 2002.

Kyle Smith, Love Monkey. New York: Morrow, 2004.

Ginger Strand, Flight: a novel. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005.

Bruce Wagner, Still Holding. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003.

Wendy Wasserstein, Elements of Style: a novel. New York: Knopf, 2006.

R.H. Weber, Homeland. New York: Other Press, 2004.

Paul West, The Immensity of the Here and Now. Rutherford, N.J.: Voyant, 2003.

## **Suspense**

Jeffrey Archer, False Impression. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006.

Christopher Dickey, The Sleeper. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004.

Dan Fesperman, The Warlord's Son. New York: A.A. Knopf, 2004.

Paul Garrison, The Ripple Effect. New York: Morrow, 2004.

N.M. Kelby, Theater of the Stars: a novel of Physics and Memory. New York: Hyperion, 2003.

Michelle Mitchell, The Latest Bombshell. New York: H. Holt, 2003.

John Nance, Turbulence. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2002.

S.J. Rozan, Absent Friends. New York: Delacorte Press, 2004.

Bruce Sterling, The Zenith Angle. New York: Del Ray, 2004.

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### **Thrillers**

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